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ABSTRACT

The theory and practice of supervision developed during a period in which the legitimization of any enterprise was most effectively sought through appeals to science and scientific methods for problem-solving. The failure of scientific discipline to develop conclusively effective theories in many social fields, including supervision, suggests that the technical rational view of knowledge may not be capable of delivering answers to moral, ethical, political, and other complex questions. A more effective source of knowledge may lie in intuition and reflection on practical experience. This kind of knowledge is more closely associated with artistic than with scientific understanding. A new form of supervision called "dialectical supervision" jettisons the traditional dominant, hierarchical, and instrumentalist approach to supervision in favor of an approach that stresses dialog, mutual effort toward common goals, acceptance of alternative strategies and interpretations, and a sharing of professional responsibility and power. Fifty-five references are cited. (PGD)

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# Cinderella Syndrome: A Philosophical View of Supervision as a Field of Study

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Paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 1986

# Cinderella Syndrome: A Philosophical View of Supervision As A Field of Study

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## Introduction

What passes as the theory, research and practice of supervision in schools, is desperately in need of overhaul. I argue in this paper that two decades after Joseph Schwab's (1969) pronouncement that "the field of curriculum is moribund", the field of supervision eminently qualifies for that dubious distinction. Morally bankrupt, intellectually bereft of ideas, and with little serious scholarly discourse about the intellectual heritage and paradigms that impregnate our work, the raging debates in the philosophy of science over the contested epistemological claims to knowledge, have passed us by.

The major problem with the study of supervision is that while there has been a plethora of research and much hortative literature on the practicalities of doing supervision, there has been virtually no attempt to stand back and look at the area of study itself (Smyth, 1985a), what it purports to be, where it has come from, what it aspires to, where it is headed, and how it relates to discussion and debate in the broader area of philosophy of science. As Toulmin (1972, p.84) argued, any field that hopes to make any conceptual advances must remain continually open to criticism and change if it is to move beyond being a mere pretender. It is, above all, this ability to develop an inquiring inner eye on itself, that represents the hallmark of a field of study.

I want to try, therefore, to move beyond specific considerations of what supervision means, how it fits within education, and how it might be better executed, and locate discussion in the broader context of what the process and the study of supervision is about. Instead of the unquestioning acceptance of past practices, it would be comforting if there were the beginnings of some signs of disarray in the field - but, there are few! The notable exception is the vigorous reaction (Corbin, 1985; Costa, 1984) to the instrumentalist brand of supervision propounded by Madeline Hunter. Unlike our sibling field of curriculum, however, we cannot yet fully lay claim to be "wallowing in a quagmire of uncertainty, contentiousness and acrimony" (Beyer, 1985, p.2).

If the work we do in supervision is to ultimately contribute to the creation of a credible field of study, by which I mean one that is believable by the community of scholars who contribute to it, then it is imperative that our work have a critical and problematic view of itself, and of its relationship to teaching (Smyth, 1985b). If we are to be articulate and insistent about the merits, defects and appropriateness of the epistemologies, paradigms and methodologies of our work then there are several questions we need to ask ourselves:

* whether our work is justified methodologically in relation to the problems and issues of the field?
* whether our work exhibits a critical awareness of the substantive issues of the field itself, especially a preparedness to criticise the foundations of the field, as well as questioning its technicalities?
* whether our work is clear about its own limitations and is able to demonstrate a critical understanding of the outstanding issues and problems requiring resolution?

In this paper I argue that supervision like other fields of professional endeavour is suffering from a legacy of being affiliated with an outmoded interpretation of science. Value-free objectivist views of science and the notions of technical rationality that accompany them, have broken-down in the face of protracted social problems - social engineering in the guise of neutral science no longer suffices. I discuss the crisis of confidence in the professions generally, and in supervision and research on teaching in particular. As a way out of this quagmire I propose a dialectical possibility for supervision that opens up for contestation and debate implicit power relationships and who has 'the right to know' about teaching. I have labelled supervision the Cinderella Syndrome because of its largely unrecognised and disregarded 'transformative' potential, as distinct from its public face of authority and manipulation. Enacted in the ways I envisage in the latter part of this paper, I see supervision as a potent means by which teachers can reclaim their professional lives.

In the section of the paper that follows, I want to locate supervision in some kind of historical context and to acknowledge Giroux's (1983) point about the need to recover our sedimented histories if we are to have any hope of resolving current issues. Acknowledging Giroux's critical perspective requires that, in order to decide what to do next, we have to ascertain why things are currenty the way they are, how they got that way, and what conditions sustain and support them.

## A Questionable Legacy

The pedigree of supervision is not an entirely irrelevant one in the context of current discussions. From the educational literature it is clear enough that the intention of the Common Schools in the U.S. in the nineteenth century was unashamedly that of changing the nature of society; those who assumed the title of "supervisor" were to be the front line evangelists in

changing the social order. Using evidence from the Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Common Schools in the State of New York (1845) Blumberg (1984) leaves little doubt as to the social reconstructionist nature of the supervisory role:

> The future of this country and its republican form of government, as they [the supervisors] saw it, was intimately connected with the schools. It would only be through [the] success and popularization [of schools] that the country would have an educated populace capable of making informed decisions and learning the skills necessary for productive adult life ... Failing to develop a viable widespread school system would result ... in the replication in this country of the condition of the South American republics which "have fallen into revolutionary decrepitude and degenerated into military despotisms ... (p.3).
>
> Without a good system of public schools, the thinking went, the great experiment in republican government that was America, where each person had the opportunity to be what he or she could be, would degenerate. Wealth would be concentrated in the hands of a few and such concentration of wealth "enables its possessor to monopolize intellectual attainment, and robs the mass of motive power to effort". Public schools were the antidote to this possibility (p.5).

What was at issue was the right of these supervisory superintendents to grant and withdraw teacher certification. Doyle (1978) has argued that it was the push by superintendents to professionalise U.S. education in the nineteenth century and thereby gain autonomy for themselves that led directly to the search for scientific justifications (and hence the quest for indicators of "teacher effectiveness") to support the exercise of power and control. According to Doyle (1978):

> A profession is an occupation that gains control over the substance of its work because its assertions about importance and efficacy are ultimately believed by society. Such a view of professionalization places special emphasis ... on the elements of power and control that influence the location of an occupation within the structure of a particular domain of work (p.144).

In schools that occurred at the supervisory level where the right to control teaching was fought.

The struggle was over wresting control over the recruitment of teachers away from the influence of local political patronage, and investing it in the hands of a civil servant class proclaimed to be above and beyond reproach (Smyth, 1984a); hence the recourse to scientism as a way of legitimating supervisory actions. Cubberley (1922), for example, saw in testing the opportunity for supervisors to establish standards against which to be able to defend what they were doing. It was argued, that by this means, control over education could be shifted out of the emotionally-charged world of whim and local political influence, and placed within the jurisdiction of civil servants able to legitimate their actions by reference to scientifically established standards. Buchmann (1984) argues that:

> ... the public accepts scientific findings not because it shares the scientific conception of reality but because of the social authority of science. Scientific knowledge and judgement are opaque and indisputable for most people (p.431).

It thus became possible to link the actions of supervisors to the outcomes of schooling through various indicators of efficiency and effectiveness. As Doyle (1978) argued:

> Effectiveness indicators would thus have substantial symbolic value in establishing the technical qualifications of administrators to manage the affairs of education. Of equal importance were the immediate practical consequences of control over entry into the classroom. Possession of a scientifically-derived set of teacher qualities related systematically to effectiveness would enable superintendents to decide on disinterested, rational grounds who would be appointed to teaching positions. In this manner, the profession would gain a powerful weapon in the fight against the political patronage system. Who could reasonably question a decision not to hire the ward boss' niece when she did not meet "scientific" criteria of effectiveness? (Doyle, 1978, p.145).

For Karier (1982), the blueprint for supervision established for schools at this time had quite sinister and long-ranging implications:

> The same year Karl Marx wrote <u>The Communist Manifesto</u> (1848) Horace Mann penned his last Annual Report to the Massachusetts Board of Education. In that report was embedded a theory of human capital that conceptually linked schooling to economic and social growth within a meritocratically-organized social and economic class system. Here, then, was the rationale for public

> schooling that would sustain the American nation for the next century. Implicit in that rationale was an ideology of competetive and possessive individualism packaged in the context of equal opportunity for all within a system of schools locally managed under state authorization (p.6).
>
> ... As the system became more bureaucratic, the primary values became standardization and efficiency. As means became evaluated more on efficiency grounds, the role of the professional teacher and supervisor entered the highly charged problematic world of social engineering (p.4).

Despite the coming and going of co-operative supervision, human relations supervision, developmental supervision, and various other forms of supervision in schools, it is not clear that even today we have severed the connection between supervision and the industrial-managerial model with which it has been closely affiliated. Extant models of supervision are still largely based on notions of social engineering and evoke feelings among teachers of impersonal hierarchical processes of inspection, domination and quality control. As Eisner (1982) put it:

> It has connotations that seem at least somewhat incongruous with educational practice. The relationship between supervisor and the teacher is hierarchical ... (suggesting that the supervisor) ... has the right to prescribe to the latter how the job is to be done. A sense of dialogue or interchange between two professionals trying to improve the educational experience of the young tends to get lost (p.54).

It is, after all, the metaphors we choose to frame our thinking with that drive our descriptive language about schooling, which in turn has a bearing on the way we work with school people - if you like, the way we "supervise". Sawada and Calley (1985) have claimed:

> The dominant metaphor for today's education is the Newtonian Machine: the school is a more or less well oiled machine that processes (educates?) children. In this sense, the education system (school) comes complete with production goals (desired end states); objectives (precise intermediate end states); raw material (children); a physical plant (school building); a 13-stage assembly line (grades K-12); directives for each stage (curriculum guides); processes for each stage (instruction); managers for each stage (teachers); plant supervisors (principals); trouble shooters (consultants, diagnosticians); quality control mechanisms (discipline, rules, lock-step progress through stages, conformity); interchangeability of parts (teacher-proof curriculum, 25 students per processing

> unit, equality of treatment); uniform criteria for all (standardized testing interpreted on the normal curve); and basic product available in several lines of trim (academic, vocational, business, general). Is this reminiscent of Fords, Apples, and Big Macs? (pp.14-15).

Sergiovanni (1984a) has argued that the way we choose to view teaching has profound influences on our notions of supervision:

> The pipeline or conduit metaphor is often used to depict teaching. "Instructional delivery systems" are conceived as pipelines through which knowledge and information must travel. Student outcomes are at one end of this line and teaching inputs are at the other end. Care must be taken to keep this instructional pipeline flowing smoothly; obstructions in the line must be eliminated; and the line itself must be shaped to avoid blockage kinks. Inputs must be properly sized to fit the pipeline and a system of monitoring must be established to ensure easy movement of this input through the line. Student outcomes need to be carefully checked to assure that they fit input intents. Improvements need to be made in the composition and arrangement of the pipeline itself in an effort to maximize, even further, student outcomes at lowest cost and so on (p.8).

The purpose of this discussion of metaphors is to underscore the point that if the prevailing metaphor that drives educational thought, discussion and action derives from Newtonian physics, and given what we know about the boundedness and limitations of that view of physics, then we need ways of challenging these awesome stabilising forces!

## Crisis of Confidence in Professional Knowledge[1].

The most pressing issue for me in thinking about supervision is whether we should be focussing on the "figure" or the "ground" - that is to say, whether to focus on the technicalities of supervision, or the values and ideals purportedly implicit in the notion of supervision. I believe that what has inhibited us to date has been an excessive pre-occupation with the former, to the exclusion of the latter. Sergiovanni (1984b) captured it neatly when he said, we err:

> ... by looking in the same places, relying on the same intellectual frames of reference, ... travelling the same roads in seeking improved practices. Supervision will not improve much by doing <u>better</u> that which we are now doing. The models

> upon which our practices rest and the theoretical bases for generating these models ... are the problem. Basic knowledge perspectives will need to be changed before practices will change ... (pp.54-5).

If we continue to focus exclusively on better ways of doing more of the same, we will never grapple with the crucial "educative" issues within supervision. As long as we continue to be pre-occupied with the technical and the instrumental, important moral, ethical, political and philosophical questions will continue to be ignored.

One way of characterising the current scene in supervision is to say that it is suffering from a "crisis of confidence". The claims to professional knowledge about supervision are out of step with the changing situations of practice. I can illustrate my point best by drawing on the recent work of Donald Schon (1983) in his, Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. Schon (1983) argues that in the professions, generally;

> The complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of (current) professional practice ... (p.14),

are not able to be handled by recourse to existing bodies of knowledge, or accepted ways of acquiring such knowledge.

What Schon (1983) is saying is that the rules of the game have changed radically. Accepted and taken for granted ways of applying specialised knowledge to resolve particular recurring problems no longer seem to work. The foundations of professional practice seem to have shifted dramatically from that of 'problem solving' to one of 'problem setting' (or problem posing); that is to say, from a rational process of choosing from among possibilities that best suit agreed upon ends, to a situation that opens up for contestation and debate the nature of those decisions, the ends to which they are to be directed, and the means by which they are achievable. Rather than relying upon tried-and-tested knowledge to be applied in all circumstances of a similar kind, the scene is increasingly characterised by

the application of knowledge acquired from previous particular cases.

What this has meant for professionals is a transformation:

- from a position where scientifically derived knowledge is deemed superior, to a circumstance in which artistic and intuitive knowledge may be equally as appropriate;
- from an a priori instrumental view of knowledge, to one that reflects knowledge as being tentative and problematic;
- from a view which pre-supposes answers to complex social questions, to one that endorses the importance of problem posing and negotiated resolution.

There are a number of inter-related explanations for this shifting position, not the least of which has to do with the inability of the professions to maintain public credibility in the face of changing social conditions. In particular, the issues confronting the professions are far more complex, problematic and protracted, and the nature of knowledge far too tentative and incomplete, to enable issues to be resolved through the mere application of 'technical' knowledge. In the U.S. scene, Schon (1983) summarised it thus:

> A series of announced national crises - the deteriorating cities, the pollution of the environment, the shortage of energy - seemed to have roots in the very practice of science, technology, and public policy that were being called upon to alleviate them.
>
> Government sponsored 'wars' against such crises seemed not to produce the expected results; indeed, they often seemed to exacerbate the crises (p.9).
>
> . . . the public predicaments of society began to seem less like problems to be solved through expertise than like dilemmas whose resolution could come about through moral and political choice (p.10).

These problems have been further compounded by the professions' growing disregard for their own espoused tenets; namely, a contribution to the social good, placing clients' needs above personal self-interest, and self-regulation

of standards of competence and morals. Added to this is Schon's (1983) observation that as professionals become increasingly unionised and industrialised they move towards a state of bureaucratisation with an accompanying decline in the perceived importance of autonomy and independence of action which had hitherto characterised them.

The crisis in the professions is therefore, related to an increased questioning by the community of the concept of professional standing, but also to a growing feeling of the inability of the professions to 'deliver' solutions on important social issues. This crisis of confidence also manifests itself in the re-alignment of interests away from client needs, towards those of business and government. Both of these may, however, still only be a partial explanation of the growing disillusionment with the professions; the more significant explanation may have to do with whether existing forms of professional knowledge are indeed capable of meeting the problems and needs of society.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find a babble of voices within the professions as they seek to unravel the tangled web of competing and conflicting values, goals, purposes and interests that comprise professional practice. Neither does it come as any surprise to hear of the multiple and shifting images that constitute the practices within these professions. What is surprising is that so many practitioners have begun to develop the capacity for reducing what Schon (1983) describes as 'messes to manageable plans' (p.18) and to make as much sense as they have of the conflicting demands made by so many different groups upon them.

What is really at issue here is the epistemology or ways of knowing and acquiring professional knowledge. The tension is between the dominant epistemology of 'technical rationality' where theory is separate from practice, and the emergent paradigm of 'reflection-in-action' which emphasises forms of knowing that disavow the separation of theory from practice. The

result is a fundamentally different way of thinking about professional practice, one where theory emerges out of practice, and where practice informs theory; in a word, 'praxis', a notion I shall return to later in the final section of this paper.

Technical rationality (embedded in the positivist epistemology) has powerfully shaped our Western institutions, ideas, and ways of thinking and acting. It had its origins in the Reformation as a way of bringing science and technology to bear in purging thought and action of mysticism, superstition and metaphysics. Originally intended as a way of extending technical control over the physical environment it came to be applied to social, moral and political issues as well. Its major hallmark was a disciplined and rigorous approach to problem solving based upon the application of empirically verified, cumulative, scientific knowledge.

This knowledge was, and still is, applied to the solving of problems in stable institutional settings where the ends have been unambiguously determined and where technical procedures can be vigorously applied. According to the technical rational view, basic research is undertaken in order to yield practical results to be utilised in applied research which will eventually generate problem solving techniques that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided. Positivists regard these forms of knowing and doing as being related, one to the other, in hierarchical ways; basic research is more important than applied research, which in turn is superior and separate from practice.

Leaving aside the questionable nature of the distinction between applied and basic research, a major difficulty with technical rationality is that it presumes problems are able to be solved by the selection from among available means and that the ends to which activity are directed are established and unquestionable. In the real world, ends are much more complex, ill-defined and problematic. It is becoming clear that the technical rational model has

become inadequate, incomplete and discredited as a way of dealing with complex and ill-defined issues in times of uncertainty, instability, and unpredictability.

We need, therefore, to pay closer attention to the intuitive ways in which skilful and artistic practitioners are able to make sense of confusing and contradictory circumstances. But, as Schon (1983) reminds us, this involves a choice; whether to occupy the high moral ground of certainty and predictability of research-based theory for the resolution of our problems, or descending into the swampy lowlands where situations are murky and characterised by confusing 'messes' with no easy solution. Opting for the latter, means adopting a stance in which knowledge is treated in a tentative fashion. Greater attention is therefore given to the 'playfullness' of knowledge and to the job-embedded ways of learning that acknowledge the fundamental importance of questioning, criticising and reformulating taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of work. It means engaging in what Schon (1984) describes as reflection-in-action, or "... a reflective conversation with the situation" (p.42). By reflecting upon our action Schon (1983) claims that as individuals and communities we acquire knowledge, skills and concepts that empower us to re-make, and if necessary re-order the world in which we live. It takes the form of:

> ... on-the-spot surfacing, criticising, restructing and testing of intuitive understandings of experienced phenomena (Schon, 1984 p.42).

In struggling to describe what it is that is occuring we often cannot locate conventional rules and procedures to account for what we know:

> ... we find ourselves at a loss, or produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate ... (O)ur knowing is in our action (Schon, 1983 p.49).

Even though we may be unconscious of doing it, we often engage in a dialectical process of conversing with the unique aspects of the settings in which we work so as to generate forms of knowledge of a kind characterised as

'what works for us'. This is a legitimate way of knowing that amounts to engaging in a form of experimentation that enables us to not only check out hunches and resolve issues of immediacy, but to also develop a repertoire of knowledge that helps us to make sense out of confusion, ambiguity and contradiction. In what amounts to a recant of his earlier writing Tyler (in Hosford, 1984) claims that researchers and academics develop a misguided view about the importance of technical rational knowledge. According to him:

> The practice of every profession evolves informally, and professional procedures are not generally derived from a systematic design based on research findings.
>
> Professional practice has largely developed through trial and error and intuitive efforts. Practitioners, over the years, discover procedures that appear to work and others that fail. The professional practice of teaching, as well as that of law, medicine and theology, is largely a product of the experience of practitioners, particularly those who are more creative, inventive, and observant than the average (p.9).

Knowledge gained in this way through exposing practice to critical scrutiny is different in form and substance to knowledge acquired through technical rational means - for one thing, it does not have to be applied to a problem situation; it is already being used to transform the nature of practice. There is no separation between the developer and the user of knowledge - they are one and the same person. Professional knowledge acquired in this way is not, therefore, static and dependent upon legitimation by outside 'experts'. There is a quality to it that acknowledges a certain willingness to take risks and to confront circumstances of uncertainty in an enterprising way. For those who rely on the certainty and predictability guaranteed by technical knowledge "... uncertainty is a threat; its admission is a sign of weakness" (Schon, 1983, p.69).

Reflection in action can occur in deliberate and calculated ways after-the-event, but it is just as likely to be an inseparable part of on-going practice. Where it occurs in the latter way, practitioners are in fact modifying their action in the light of feelings and information about their

own effects. They are not circumscribed by having to rely on knowledge generated by outside authorities; through monitoring what they do themselves, they have a way of knowing that is inherent in intelligent action.

What is interesting is that although we can, and do reflect-in-action, it is seldom that we reflect on our reflection-in-action. This may seem to imply an infinite regression, but it can be overcome by keeping in mind that all actions are ultimately practical. According to Schon (1984) "a crucially important dimension ... tends to remain private and inaccessible to others ..." (p.43). Because awareness of our own thinking usually grows out of the process of articulating it to others, as practitioners, we often have little access to our own reflection in action. In other words, we do not have the disposition or the grammar for talking about the way in which we reflect on what we do; we are unable to communicate to others about it; if others learn, it is by some fortutious process like contagion.

These notions become especially poignant when considering an area of study like supervision in which there is an entrenched presumption that a definitive body of knowledge exists about teaching, that this knowledge is possessed by one group (described as "supervisors"), while deemed to be absent in varying degrees among teachers. There is the added presumption that this knowledge is indeed capable of transference from one to the other. Hawkins (1972) captured the implicit power relationship in this when he said:

> We ... are sometimes inclined to the view that nothing is known which is not known to a group of people campaigning to have it decided that they are the official knowers (p.8).

When we talk about supervision we are really talking about a social relationship in which one person is presumed to be an "expert", and as such "knows, or is believed by others to know, everything about a particular activity. He wants to, and is expected to offer 'solutions' to problems" (Parekh, 1970, p.461). The difficulty with expertise of this kind is that it is of a technical kind that is severely constrained and does not permit the analysis of issues from alternative viewpoints. As Apple (1974) expressed it:

> ... the bureaucratic institution ... furnishes the problems to be investigated ... the type of knowledge that the expert has to supply is determined in advance ... [and] ... the expert is expected to work on the practical problems as defined by the institution, and not offer advice outside these boundaries (p.89).

Because experts are ideologically bound by concepts, beliefs and values that are largely taken-for-granted, Apple (1974) paraphrasing Mannheim, argues that there is a likely insistence on predictability and control with the real risk of:

> substituting the search for a smoothly running factory for the critically important debate over the purposes and means of the institution (p.92).

Under these circumstances, Hartnett and Naish (1980) claim that questions about the educational ends to which teachers work, are taken as settled or largely irrelevant. Where teachers are treated as technicians unquestioningly following agendas determined by others, such emphasis on means to the exclusion of ends "... is at best, amoral" (p.265).

There is little solace to be found either in the research on teaching. Given what we know about the tentative, inconclusive and problematic nature of research on teaching (Berliner, 1984; Buchmann, 1984; Smyth, 1984b; Garrison & MacMillan, 1984), we must be circumspect about the utility of such research. To argue as Hunter (1984) does that:

> Translation of research-based theory into practice has now been accomplished, so we can describe and substantiate much of what is effective in teaching ... (p.174).

is to put a form of legitimation on this kind of work, that even the researchers themselves hesitate to do. It is to claim a degree of conclusiveness that does not exist. Stenhouse (1983) put it neatly when he said:

> The provisional knowledge created in the educational academy may be seen as second-order ... knowledge about educational practice offered to teachers ... [K]nowledge expressed as generalizations, more or less reliable, contributes to the teachers ... understanding of the world in which they have to act. However, few such generalizations offer guidance as to how

> to act since they cannot by definition ... take account either of the professional biographical development of the teacher ... or of the crucial contextual and temporal variables. Hence, at this level of action, research can offer only relatively insecure hypotheses, principles, and theories (p.212).

Before we accept the products of other people's research about teaching and "apply" them through the supervisory process, we need to be clear about the power relationships that are at work. As Fenstermacher (1983) put it:

> Instead of asking how the implications shall be used, we might ask who is to decide what the implications of research for practice are. In one sense, every knowledgeable, competent person may help derive implications. But in the end the critical question is whether these pre-formulated implications are truly implications for you or me, given our contexts and situations. The ultimate arbitrator of whether some finding has implications for practice is the person engaged in the practice (p.498).

Embedded in the "applied" view of research on teaching is the notion of supervision as a bureaucratic relationship in which a corrective service is delivered by those of superior wisdom, to those who are less experienced, less capable and less competent. Sergiovanni (1984c) argues that such views of supervision:

> ... typically emphasize goal setting, rational planning, accepting events at face value, objective truth-seeking verified by public knowledge, and rational responses to the process from teachers (p.358).

These are real-world conditions that are, at best, highly suspect. They are predicated on a view that school people operate according to notions of rationality that embrace a determination of unambiguous goals, clear statements of objectives, a search for valid alternatives, and objectivist forms of knowledge. Teaching is far more indeterminate, ambiguous and value laden than that. As Hawkins (1972) argues, teaching involves a relationship which:

> ... lies inescapably in the moral domain and is subject to moral scrutiny and judgement. If teaching is good or bad, it is morally good or bad. This claim ... is not a recommendation or a hoped-for view of the case, but it is a claim of fact.

> The relationship, by its very nature, involves an offer of control by one individual over the functioning of another, who in accepting this offer, is tacitly assured that control will not be exploitative but will be used to enhance the competence and extend the independence of the one controlled, and in due course will be seen to do so (pp.8-9).

When we, therefore, address the interface between supervision and teaching, there are serious ethical, moral and political questions about the nature of the social relationship between supervisors, teachers and children that need to be asked. Above all, we need to ask "why are we engaging in supervision?" From my reading of the supervision literature, once we remove the rhetoric of "improvement", "teacher development" and "enhanced professional enactment" that tends to surround supervision, we are left with the threadbare notions of efficiency and effectiveness that sound suspiciously like the business management canons of accountability, inspection and quality control.

If we pursue the route of acknowledging the connection between supervision and management sciences, we should also remember the role of Frederick Taylor in the early 1900's, and the view of man implicit in his ideals. As Taylor (1911) himself put it:

> One of the first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles the ox than any other type ... (H)e must consequently be trained by a man more intelligent than himself (p.59).

While I know of nobody in education who openly espouses Taylorism, Baker (1977) points out the difficulty of denying history; fragments live on into the present in a very real way:

> Today we would shrink from voicing such a degrading point of view. Yet remnants of Taylor's ideology are deeply embedded in the way we organize our social systems ... The terms have changed but the ethos is the same. The language has the appearance of being objective, rational, scientific and value free. It is of course nothing of the kind. Each statement is intertwined with values related to efficiency, productivity and what <u>some</u> people regard as politically and administratively important. <u>It is easy to forget that what we are basically talking about is one group of people which uses technology and</u>

> knowledge to do things at, and to another group of people, in a systematic and manipulative way (my emphases).

But, do we really shrink from such abhorrent views? Those who propound an instrumental/technical view of teaching and supervision are unwittingly endorsing Taylor's world-view. Protestations aside, when I hear statements like the following (Hunter, 1984), I am left in no doubt that scientific management is alive and thriving in our school systems:

> Teaching involves factor analyzing ... goals into dependent sequences of learning, diagnosing students to determine what each has achieved in that sequence, and employing psychological principles that contribute to the speed and effectiveness with which each student acquires new learnings in these sequences (p.170) ... Teaching is an applied science derived from research and human learning and human behavior ... (p.171). The science of teaching is based on cause-effect relationships existing in three categories of decisions that all teachers make (p.171).

Even though Hunter may not consciously identify herself with the values of Taylorism, through her actions she is endorsing a way of working that is deeply embedded in Taylor's ideology. The language may be different, but the exploitative social relationships are the same.

To construe teaching as an applied science founded on technical rational values whereby goals are pre-determined, student needs diagnosed in a value-free way, and findings from psychological research applied rigorously, amounts to portraying the supervision of teachers in terms of bureaucratic rationality. When related to schooling, I find such an unenlightened view of teachers and their professional capacities, to be inadequate. After all, Sergiovanni (1985) reminds us:

> A person's view of supervision does not exist separate from her or his view of teaching, the nature of power and authority, and how knowledge in supervision is generated and used (p.7).

Likewise, Fenstermacher (1983) argues the case for the inescapable moral relationship within teaching, and between teaching and supervision:

> As we think about what it means to participate in the education of fellow human beings, most of us hold the hope that teachers will inform and assist students in ways that enable them to make

> their own enlightened decisions and engage in thought and action ... In other words, we believe that students should emerge from schooling not just knowing and believing what their teachers do, and not thinking, deciding, and acting exactly as their teachers do, but rather as autonomous, authentic persons ... We may ask [therefore] whether teachers are likely to treat students in ways that will produce educative ends if they are constantly treated as if their primary duty is to conform to policies, rules, mandates, and regulations (p.498) (my emphases).

A Dialectical View of Supervision

The title of this paper, the Cinderella Syndrome, was deliberately chosen to highlight the often disregarded, neglected, unrecognised but immanent possibilities in supervision (Smyth, 1986b). The issues become clearer when we focus on the medieval Latin origins of supervision as a process of "perusing or scanning a text for errors or deviations from the original text". Like its more recent educational counterpart, the original notion of supervision was problematic. While there were obvious instrumental aspects to the process of inspecting liturgical text, there were also a host of unanswered questions. In Grumet's (1979) words:

> What does the supervisor look for? Smudges? Omissions? Does he bend to the work eyeing each word and disregarding the meaning of the aggregate as the skilled copy reader who trains himself to examine the surface content only? Are his standards for the work shared by the one who executed it, both participating in a practice so saturated with their common faith that the criteria for scrutiny need scarcely be uttered?

Grumet's (1979) idealised backwards glance at supervision highlights a range of contentious issues including "ambiguity", "role conflict" and "the problem of interpretation" - issues that continue to plague us in modern-day supervision of teaching. While I am unclear how we came to make the transition from the medieval Latin to present day connotations, the parallels are nevertheless quite striking. Where the medieval monks were confronted with difficult issues of "style, design, interpretation and intent to be negotiated" in their liturgical work (Grumet, 1979, p.191), the supervision of teaching has to contend with the same issues of contestation and legitimation,

abeit in somewhat different forms. Indeed, Grumet (1979) sees the supervisor of teaching as facing "his situations with less faith in his theory and less authority among his peers than did his medieval namesake" (p.191).

The oppositional view to hierarchical forms of supervision lies in what I shall term dialectical supervision (Smyth, 1985c). What I mean by dialectical supervision may become clearer by reference to its anthesis. Gitlin and Goldstein (nd) portray standard forms of supervision (and evaluation) thus:

> Typically, teachers are not involved ... Instead, an administrator, under the constraint of district guidelines, visits a teacher's class two or three times during the school year to make judgements about retention, promotion and tenure. These abrupt observation visits are initiated with little sense of the classroom's history and upon completion are not integrated into its ongoing history. In making these judgements the administrator is usually armed with a summative rating scale which lists any number of desirable teaching outcomes ... The [supervisor] acts as the expert who knows the script and score and has in mind how it can best be realized. The teachers satisfy or do not satisfy the expert in varying degrees. If the teacher is fortunate, she will learn the reasons for her ... assessment and ways to modify what needs improvement. The activity is essentially monologic, essentially a process of communiques, of one-way declarations about the state of things: the goal is to change practice to be more congruent with the expert's standards of how classrooms should be controlled or ventilated or how to introduce the Pythagorean theorem.
>
> What stands out as characteristic of this procedure is that it is unilateral. Those who are thought to be experts impose standards concerning desirable teaching outcomes on those who supposedly need the feedback. The problem is that even if feedback changes teacher behavior in acceptable ways, the hierarchical relation between the expert and the teacher is reproduced. And, if change occurs it will not be based on a joint inquiry into the rightness of particular teaching outcomes, but rather based on standards that are imposed solely by a group's position in the hierarchy. This type of strategic action, which characterizes most [supervisory] processes, therefore, guarantees that the expert/teacher relation will be one of domination (pp.3-4).

Given the hegemonic and exploitative relationship inherent in traditional forms of supervision, I propose in their place a dialectical notion that not only regards teaching problematically, but which radicalizes teachers into dialogue among themselves towards pedagogical consciousness about their teaching and the broader social context of their work.

The notion of dialectical takes its fullest expression in 'praxis' (Small, 1978) where the unity of theory and practice is bound up with the inescapable moral and political nature of human activity. In deliberate and conscious social practices, the individual acts upon and changes others, but in the process is transformed himself or herself. It is the 'critical' nature of praxis and its concern with "consciousness", "evaluation", "choice" and "decision" which distinguishes it from other habitual routines and unreflective ways of life. Actors cannot, therefore be spectators or onlookers. It is in uncovering the taken-for-grantedness of existing communicative and social relationships, that participants are liberated from power relationships that have become frozen and unquestioned over time. Praxis is, therefore, about the removal of impediments and the transformation of people that enables the "emergence of new faculties or the development of existing ones" (Small, 1978, p.218). It is also concerned with the creation of genuinely harmonious relationships:

> ... the one-sidedness of purely self-directed activity accounts for the one-sidedness of theory isolated from real activity, while the one-sidedness of purely other-directed activity is the one-sidedness of an unthinking activism ... If the opposite to ... one-sidedness ... is taken to be balance and harmony ... then the threat of a narrowly constricting definition of the fully human life may be seen as unfounded ... (Small, 1978, p.219).

To talk of supervision in 'praxis-like' terms and to construe it dialectically is to jettison the dominant, hierarchical, and instrumentalist approach and to posit a view of supervision that is more inclusive of oppositional viewpoints of teaching and learning. Dialectical, as used in this context:

> ... is a convenient term for the kind of thinking which takes place when human beings enter into a friendly (meaning: well-intentioned, co-operative, genial, and genuine) dialogue in order to find a synthesis, or when they engage in reflection and self-reflection (Proppe, 1982, p.18).

Such a dialectical perspective would involve participants in self-formative processes whereby they are able to analytically reconstruct accounts of their own histories, while locating themselves in it, and being able to see how elements of their past live-on into the present. Such a view would begin to acknowledge that:

> ... both personal beliefs and values are relative in the sense that they can never be final, can always be superseded. They are absolute in that, even as error - as approximations - they contribute to further possibilities of understanding ... As we become aware, our perceptions are recognized as simplifications of reality. We realize we systematically ignore details, discrepancies, and distortions. Every act of perception simplifies the object. We come to know through successions of these erroneous simplifications (Proppe, 1982, p.17).

In dialectical supervision teachers and supervisors focus not only on the specifics of teaching, but do so in an inquiring way so as to articulate a relationship between teaching and the social and political ends towards which it is directed. They come to see their teaching, as well as the process of supervision itself, as a part of a broader social purpose. The hallmark of this form of supervision is a willing sharing and acceptance of each others beliefs, values, preferences and opinions through symmetrical and undistorted forms of communication.

There is an impressive and growing body of practitioners and scholars who, through their actions, have endorsed many of the notions implicit in dialectical supervision (Bullough, Gitlin & Goldstein, 1984; Gitlin & Goldstein, nd; Bullough & Gitlin, 1986; Tripp, 1984; Day, 1985; Apple, 1974; Garman, 1982; Sergiovanni, 1984; Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Tom, 1985; Rudduck, 1984) even though there are unresolved questions as to what should be regarded as the "arena of the problematic" in teaching - teaching strategies, the moral bases of teaching, or the social ends towards which teaching is directed. As Tom (1985) expressed it:

> To make teaching problematic is to raise doubts about what, under ordinary circumstances, appears to be effective or wise practice. The objects of our doubts might be accepted

> principles of good pedagogy, typical ways teachers respond to classroom management issues, customary beliefs about the relationship of schooling and society, or ordinary definitions of teacher authority - both in the classroom and in the broader school context (p.37).

Supervision of the kind which starts with teachers and supervisors understanding and awareness of themselves as social actors and helps them to develop through autonomy and responsibility, provides a way of working within teaching that is more practical, realistic and just. It acknowledges participants as conscious and reflective beings, existing in a world they are constantly questioning, re-creating and transforming. As Grumet (1979) put it, the experiential and reflective aspects:

> ... serve to help the teacher to become a student of her own work and to assume a dialectical relationship to that work ... (p.255)

such that "the questioner and the questioned constantly appear to each other in a different light" (Streeter, 1967, p.508).

Throughout, the presumption with dialectical supervision is that the supervisor will "monitor her own investment in the relationship she develops with the teachers with whom she works ... examining with rigor, whose interests are being served" (Grumet, 1979, p.254). It involves helping teachers to place themselves "... in consciously critical confrontation with their problems [and in the process] to make them agents for their own recuperation" (Fried, 1980, p.8). Dialectical encounters of the kind envisaged are concerned above all with "reflexivity". To act reflexively:

> People must be considered both the creators and the products of the social situations in which they live ... In all our activities we act on the basis of intent, observe the reactions of others to our behavior, and act purposefully again. The most important elements of any social situation are the shared meanings which participants take from the process of interaction and which ultimately shape their behavior. Significant knowledge of any social situation, therefore, consists of an awareness of the emerging meanings that participants are developing and the specific ways that these meanings are functioning to shape their endeavours and thus the characteristics of the situation itself (Bolster, 1983, p.303).

What is being proposed is really a "liberating" view of supervision (see Sergiovanni, 1984b), one that frees teachers from dependence upon conventional axioms about teaching and the habitual and taken-for-grantedness that unconsciously characterises their teaching. Berlak (1985) encapsulated the meaning of liberation when she said:

> People are liberated to the extent that they are, at the same time, increasingly free to choose from a range of alternative perspectives on themselves and their social worlds. This freedom of choice requires the ability to see ones' own views of what is good or right, possible or impossible, true or false as problematic, socially constructed, subject to social and political influence (p.2).

Viewed in this way, teachers take on the characteristics of "intellectuals" rather than those of "technicians". As Kohl (1983) put it, teachers should be intellectuals as well as practitioners. For him an intellectual is:

> ... someone who knows about his or her field, has a wide breadth of knowledge about other aspects of the world, who uses experience to develop theory and question practice. An intellectual is also someone who has the courage to question authority and who refuses to act counter to his own or her own experience and judgement (p.30).

When teachers are encouraged to take the kind of 'critical' stance where moral issues are inseparable from educational ones, they are considered capable because of their engagement with practice to be able to offer "an informed commentary on, and critique of, current policies and practices" (Hartnett & Naish, 1980, p.269). They are, for example, able to offer insightful accounts on the nature of the school system, what it aspires to achieve, how power is used, and how it might be re-distributed.

Within a dialectical approach to supervision the purpose and intent of research no longer continues to be the development of universal prescriptions to be applied in the remediation of teaching. Indeed, the reflexive relationship between research and teaching requires:

> ... envisioning each classroom as a small culture created by teacher and student as they work together over a period of

> time. The basic elements of the process of teaching in such a conceptualisation are not defined as specific teacher initiatives which cause students to master skills or process information in predictable ways, but rather as constant demands that a specific classroom environment places on those who work in it. The ultimate purpose of research based on this view of teaching is not to generate universal propositions that predict teacher effectiveness, but rather to build and verify a coherent explanation of how a particular classroom works. The resultant knowledge will not be expressed as nostrums to improve teacher competence, but as systematic and reliable information which teachers can use to shed light on their own pedagogical situations (Bolster, 1983, pp.303-4).

Developing within teachers and supervisors these questioning ways of working in which universal propositions are replaced by more problematic views, will hopefully follow-through in the way teachers work with students. As Berlak (1985) put it:

> ... in order for students to become freed from dependence upon ideological elements of their common wisdom ..., they must see [that] what they have come to believe is truth is socially constructed ...; they must develop a critical stance towards knowledge itself (pp.8-9).

Above all it involves a willingness to regard both students' and teachers' knowledge as purposeful and relevant. The kind of questions that become relevant in a collaborative alliance in the analysis of teaching, are ones like the following:

- How do you think children learn?
- How does your practice in the classroom relate to how you think children learn?
- How does the organization of the school program reflect ideas of learning?
- What books, theories, ideas or other sources do you use to guide you in your teaching? (Kohl, 1983, p.28)

If we start out in this less constrained way with teachers collaborating with others to examine what they are doing, why and with what effects, then maybe we can turn schools around so they become the inquiring vibrant kinds of places we want them to be. The effect is to develop a more collegial atmosphere in which becoming informed about personal strengths, weaknesses and alternative possibilities in teaching, supplant the relentless sanction-ridden supervisory quest for accountability. As Gitlin and Goldstein (nd) put it:

> By such means, teachers begin to establish relations where change is based on mutual consideration of what makes a good teacher. This type of relation in turn challenges the legitimacy of hierarchies which enable particular groups to impose standards and dominate others (p.4).

Conclusion

I started this paper by arguing that in order to qualify as a field of study, those of us in the area of supervision need to work in ways that enable us to challenge taken-for-granted, even cherished, assumptions about the area. Above all we need to develop reflexive capacities so as to transcend what we think we know about supervision, and develop alternative, even oppositional possibilities of what it might mean to be involved in the theory and practice of supervision.

As a way of opening-up for discussion, dialogue and critique what those alternatives might look like, I pointed to the not so salubrious legacy of our area of inquiry. The point of my discussion was that the social order is not given but is deliberately constructed, and in order to understand the institutions, relations and practices of our daily lives in the area of supervision it is prudent that we adopt a historical approach to reconstructing how we got to where we are. The scene as I portrayed it was one in which the business management notions of accountability, inspection and quality control are still the dominant ones.

There are very real questions as to whether the technical/rational view of knowledge, as the basis for supervision with its insistence on certainty, predictability and control, is really capable of delivering answers to the difficult ethical and moral questions that characterise teaching and supervision. Knowledge about ways of working with teachers, and indeed the very knowledge basis of teaching itself, is far more tentative and problematic. A more likely possibility was argued to lie in knowledge gained through intuition and reflection-in-action, which was more akin to the way

skilful and artistic practitioners make sense of the confusing and contradictory circumstances of their work.

Based on these ideas, dialectical supervision with its emphasis upon empowering teachers with ways of knowing that involve continually confronting themselves and searching for more responsive and less dominant educative practices, was proposed as an oppositional view to that of hierarchical scientific management of teaching. Through critical and reflective awareness of their own faculties, abilities and performances, teachers and those who work with them become capable of rescuing their practices from the dominance of 'experts' and begin the important move towards being able to reform their own teaching.

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Notes:

1. Argument here follows Schon (1983).

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